

NUMBER XXX MAY 2006

BREAKING GROUND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



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This free publication is produced six times a year by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development and Kent Communications Group. Subscription requests, change of address, and submissions for possible publication should be directed to: Breaking Ground, Council on Developmental Disabilities, 500 Deaderick Street, 13th Floor Suite 1310, Nashville, TN 37243. **PHONE:** 615-532-6615. **E-MAIL:** breakingground@vanderbilt.edu.

Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities Grant Number 1-03999-1-0. Authorization Number 339371, July 2001. 5,600 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$.46 per copy.

SELF-DIRECTING

PROVEN SUCCESS THROUGH THE PASS GRANT

By Michelle Taylor

"It's a pride thing, the ability to have independence. The ability to lead a life with as much independence as possible and to have the ability to directly control who provides assistance and medical care." – Dylan Brown

The February 2005 edition of *Breaking Ground* contained an article on a federal grant program in Tennessee called PASS. PASS stands for Personal Assistance Supports and Services. This grant is administered by the Division of Mental Retardation Services and was awarded to The Arc of Tennessee.

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that people with disabilities want to and can live in their own communities and self-direct their personal care by employing their own personal assistants to help with daily living needs. Self-directing one's services means the person who needs assistance does the recruiting, hiring, training and supervising of their employee.

"For the individual in my shoes, the ability to self-direct is fundamental. I am in control of my life." – Harold Reeves

Some people self-direct for themselves, others have someone in their life who self-directs for them. This is typically a person who knows the individual very well and is emotionally invested in their life, so they make decisions with the individual, and with an idea of what they would desire in mind.

At the time of the first article, the program was five months into the pilot project. Now, one and a half years into the pilot project, there have been challenges, lessons learned and great successes. The pilot currently serves seven individuals by paying for their PA (personal assistance) services. Each participant was allocated an annual budget which has to be managed by the person to provide for twelve months of PA services. Budgets were determined based on each person's needs.

"I am so glad for the experience this program has given me. Without it, I would not have known how to hire my PA and be an employer. Thank you so much." – Martin McGrath

The seven participants receive support from project staff in monitoring their budget and hours of services used. Project staff also help with any part of the hiring process as requested. The level of help received is determined by each individual. Six of the seven

participants opted to contract with a fiscal agent to handle all of their payroll responsibilities, and project staff assisted them in setting up that relationship.

One of the first challenges was determining how many hours of PA services were needed each week to meet each person's specific needs. Each participant completed a self-assessment tool to help them identify their needs and determine how many hours of support were required. This tool was then used to establish budget amounts allocated to each participant. Each budget amount is different and the hourly rate paid to each PA is determined by the individual.

"The best thing about living at home is that it is comfortable and I have my family there to take care of me." – Joy Hollins

Another challenge that surfaced for some of the participants was finding the right PA. A few expressed that they had trouble finding a qualified person who matched well with them and their family. One reported that once they got their ad written right, they were able to recruit the type of candidates they were looking for. Once that right person was found, five of the seven participants experienced longevity, contrary to the difficulty most persons with disabilities in the community have with maintaining consistent, qualified support.

The most important lesson learned has been that all the planning, training and scheduling—no matter how extensive—does not prepare one for emergencies or an unexpected loss of a care giver. Two participants experienced times when their primary care givers had significant health issues that caused the participants to need extra hours of services. These hours were needed to fill in where their family member was typically present.



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13TH ANNUAL PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING™ REUNION CONFERENCE

By Ned Andrew Solomon

If you were in Nashville on Saturday, February 25th, you may have heard the distant beating of drums. Well, actually, that tribal sound was emanating from the Nashville Airport Marriott, where Eddie Tuduri of the California-based Rhythmic Arts Project (TRAP) was introducing—with a room full of percussion equipment—Partners in Policymaking™ participants and graduates from across the State to the joy of learning through music.

TRAP was one of several presentations that filled a two-day agenda at the 13th Annual Partners in Policymaking Reunion Conference. Nancy Dennis and her staff from Sequatchie County (see *Breaking Ground's* January 2006 Issue for a full Sequatchie story) kicked off the weekend with a keynote address about meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities. Then, the nearly 100 Partners (a Reunion record!) chose among breakout sessions on disability and sexuality (by Maryland-based Robert Watson), transitioning to adulthood (by Partners grads Thor and Cheryl Spencer), and best educational inclusion practices (Nancy Dennis and crew).

On Friday evening, Partners ate dinner and then danced the night away to assorted DJ selections. Well some did—while others hit the sack a little earlier to prepare for Saturday's sessions on State and Federal Legislative Issues (by Council staff William Edington), the ACCESS Nashville project (by Pathfinder's Carole Moore-Slater), the aforementioned percussion impresarios, and a closing keynote by David Roche, about the benefits of taking risks.

If you would like more information about the Tennessee Partners in Policymaking Program—so you too can attend a future Reunion — please contact me at:

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PHOTO CREDIT: WAYNE DYER

SPECIAL OLYMPIC ATHLETES GIVE TWO THUMBS UP TO "THE RINGER" By Ned Andrew Solomon



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT TOP ROW: WADE MORTON, ADRIAN EWING AND KEVIN DONALDSON
BOTTOM ROW: MICHELLE GREENWAY, PAM INMAN AND ROBERT DUNMAN. PHOTO CREDIT: SKYE SOLOMON

Right around Christmas last year, filmmakers the Farrelly Brothers—known for such sensitive, serious film fare as “There’s Something About Mary” and “Dumb and Dumber”—released the comedy, “The Ringer”, about a man who feigns having an intellectual disability so he can compete in, and win a medal at the Special Olympics, to save himself and his gangster uncle from some significant financial woes. To this viewer, the movie was, of course, irreverent, but also extremely funny, surprisingly poignant, and especially sensitive in its portrayal of persons with intellectual disabilities—and featured numerous actors with intellectual disabilities in the starring roles.

But that was just me. So here at *Breaking Ground*, we decided to ask some local experts—Tennessee’s own Special Olympians—to talk about their reaction to the film.

Pam Inman has been with Special Olympics (SO) Tennessee for 15 years. Her favorite sports are swimming, golf and basketball. In addition, Ms. Inman has served six years on the SO Board of Directors. “I enjoyed the movie,” says Ms. Inman. “It was kind of nice that the person who was pretending to be a

Special Olympian, turned around and gave the medal to another athlete, because he didn’t deserve it. A very funny part was when one of the athletes who he shared the room with said funny things. I don’t think the Uncle should have told his nephew to try to fix the race by pretending to be a Special Olympian, because that’s not what Special Olympics is all about.”

Robert Dunman started with SO Tennessee 25 years ago, “when the trucks used to be green.” His favorites events are weight-lifting, track and basketball. “I don’t think the Uncle should have bet on the Olympics,” says Mr. Dunman. “I liked when they were outside running in the rain and using hurdles.”

Michelle Greenway has only been with SO Tennessee for a few years, but she’s found her niche in ice skating, swimming and basketball. “I liked it,” says Ms. Greenway. “I liked the way they found out that he wasn’t one of them, and that they accepted him anyway. It made me realize that people shouldn’t make fun of other people, just because some of us are different. I thought that the theater he started at the end was very cool, and that he learned to accept them for who they were.”

Adrian Ewing has been a member of the SO Tennessee team for 19 years. He excels at team handball, power lifting, track and basketball. “I think it was really good and funny,” says Mr. Ewing. “I think it was great to show the Olympics. The Uncle and the nephew were the ones that weren’t very bright.”

Kevin Donaldson has been involved in Special Olympics since he was a young boy. His best sports are team handball and track and field. He was named Athlete of the Year at the 2002 Special Olympics for the Tennessee games, won three gold medals for swimming at the State Summer Games, and has been to the World Games three times. “I think the movie was good, and it was an experience for me to watch it,” says Mr. Donaldson. “He

had a hard time listening to the other people. He showed respect and compassion for the other people. I’m glad he gave his award up, because he was lying about his disability. That was the right thing to do.”

80’s Guy (Wade Morton) is called 80’s Guy because he knows everything there is to know about the 80’s. Besides being a self-proclaimed music trivia whiz, 80’s Guy specializes in basketball and power lifting, and has been with SO Tennessee for 10 years. “I could relate to some of it,” says 80’s Guy. “I didn’t like when he did what he did, because it is disrespectful.” However, he did think the movie was accurate in its portrayal of the Special Olympics. “I thought the movie was realistic, because I play in some of those sports, and that’s the way we do track.”

Alan Bolick, now in his 17th year as Director of SO Tennessee, loved the movie too, and thought it was mostly true-to-life. “I keep in perspective that it was a made-for-theater movie, by Johnny Knoxville and the Farrelly Brothers,” says Mr. Bolick. “I think they took quite a chance doing the movie, because there were a lot of concerns about what the public reaction would be. In the movie, they had a TV station there all day, covering the event. Well, that’s not realistic—but it was fundamentally correct. I liked the edginess of the athletes. I would have liked to see even more edginess, and more representative of all the types of athletes we have in the program. It did show the great sense of humor and creativity with the athletes, which we see all the time.”

For the record, there are 12,521 Special Olympians registered in the State of Tennessee, with the largest contingency—2200—hailing from Memphis. Seventy-four Tennessee Olympians will join 3500 other American SO athletes in July at the first ever National SO Summer Games.

BECOMING CITIZENS – FAMILY LIFE AND THE POLITICS OF DISABILITY

BY SUSAN SCHWARTZENBERG
BOOK REVIEW BY JONATHAN MAST

This book offers a call to action for families of individuals with disabilities

The book itself is better described as a series of short stories about a trailblazing group of families in Seattle. The stories follow these pioneering families from post-World War II through their respective lives. If you are looking for a book to read that will carry you from chapter to chapter, this is not the design. However, *Becoming Citizens* offers an emotional journey through the lives of families who had to make gut wrenching decisions. In some cases, these decisions involved deciding whether to keep their children at home or to lock them away in an institution. The book begins in an era when the norm was to brush the birth of a child with a disability under the rug of society.

For families living in the 21st century, many will still see striking similarities to their own families. The book shows the courage it takes to fight to have your child treated with dignity and respect. Ms. Schwartzberg gives us great insight into the power of love a parent has for a child, and the lengths that parents are willing to go to provide the best life possible.

Most importantly, *Becoming Citizens* offers a historical perspective of changing the norms of society. The changes we see are in many cases small steps, and by themselves, seem no

more significant than a glacier moving. As a body of work, we see how banding together to form the Seattle Family Network created a powerful force.

In summary, anyone who reads this book should be moved to take action. Parents of a child with a disability who read this book should be inspired to become active socially and politically as advocates for full citizenship of those with disabilities in society.

History is a powerful teacher. Consider donating a copy of this book to local educators and medical professionals so history will not continue to repeat itself. It is a reminder that no matter what age our children are, we are still their champions. For some, it may not bring comfort to know that a lifetime of vigilance lies ahead. It is the opinion of this reviewer that

most who read *Becoming Citizens* will be driven to do what is right and to know that we can make a difference. We may not see immediate results. The Seattle Family Network was truly part of a new frontier that we benefit from today, 50 years later.

Jonathan Mast, of Memphis, is the father of Rachel Mast, age 6, and husband of Partners grad Jawanda Mast.



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SELF DIRECTING

Unlike some Cash and Counseling programs where participants can keep money in reserve, the PASS grant does not have that flexibility. Individual budgets were stretched and hours had to be decreased near the end of the fiscal year to stay on budget. As a result of these challenges, project staff worked with the families to develop back-up plans.

Overall, satisfaction surveys indicate that the participants are pleased with the program and their services. Each one prefers being in control of whom they choose to work for them, and what services their PA will provide. It seems clear that specific and individualized training, as well as higher than average hourly rate of pay, have resulted in increased PA satisfaction.

The last eighteen months have demonstrated that most people desire assistance with parts of the hiring process and with the fiscal management responsibilities. Once those initial aspects were taken care of, individuals enjoyed the freedom they had to control and manage their care and their lives. Self-directing is not just a managing employees issue, it is a quality of life issue.

For more information on services that may be available to you or on how to self-direct your services, contact Michelle Taylor, PASS Grant project director, at The Arc of Tennessee, 615-248-5878 or 1-800-835-7077.

COORDINATING CARE FOR TENNESSEE'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN BY JAN ROSEMERGY

Thomas F. Catron, director of the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination

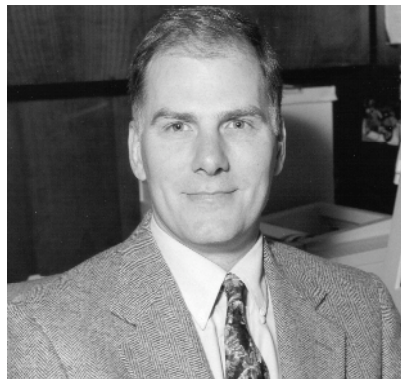


PHOTO CREDIT: VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER

Thomas F. Catron, Ph.D., was named director of the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination by Governor Phil Bredesen in August 2005. While serving in this role, Dr. Catron is on leave of absence from Vanderbilt University, where he is associate professor of psychiatry, psychology, and pediatrics; director of the Division of Community Psychiatry; co-director of the Center for Psychotherapy Research and Policy; co-director of the Center for Excellence for Children in State Custody; and an investigator in the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. The following interview took place in February 2006.

Q. What is the purpose of the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination?

A. The Office was established in 2004 to coordinate the wide range of services and supports available to children through State of Tennessee departments and the private sector, for example, TennCare, the Department of Children's Services, the Department of Human Services, and others. The scope is everything from health to child welfare to education. Service coordination is one aspect of what we do.

The Office's other major responsibility is

meeting the requirements of the Consent Decree related to State compliance with federal requirements and rules governing EPSDT—Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment. This involves engaging in outreach to ensure that children under 21 who are eligible for Medicaid receive the benefits to which they're entitled. It also involves seeing that services are in place, that they meet the various requirements set by federal law regarding their accessibility, and the like.

Q. What is EPSDT?

A. The screening covers seven components. It's a very comprehensive exam that evaluates all developmental systems, including behavioral development, and may lead to recommendations for further follow up. What the State wants and what the federal government is concerned about is ensuring that eligible children receive this annual physical every year.

Q. What are some EPSDT outreach activities?

A. The aim of outreach is to help parents know about eligibility. For example, when first enrolling in TennCare, the MCOs [Medical Care Organizations] and BHOs [Behavioral Care Organizations] tell parents what EPSDT is and what their rights are.

When children are young, most parents see that their children receive regular, routine health care. When they're older, parents are more likely to seek care only when a child is sick. TennCare-eligible parents do the same. The State is required to see that that a minimum of 80% of eligible children receive screenings. Achieving that number is a challenge because of the typical patterns around health care, especially in the teen years.

Q. Is health care accessibility an issue?

A. Making sure families have a medical home

is of interest to us and the Tennessee Academy of Pediatrics. We try to make sure that every child has a physician responsible for their care. Both urban and rural communities may lack providers or lack trust in providers, lack transportation—there's a whole host of reasons why eligible families don't find a medical home. Nevertheless, accessibility is especially a challenge in rural communities. Telemedicine is one solution. It's a good way to connect knowledgeable, experienced physicians with families who might not otherwise have access or who need specialists. Our Office also is working with the Tennessee Academy of Pediatrics to provide statewide training around developmental and behavioral issues for pediatric groups.

Q. Does the Office coordinate care related to autism?

A. We have been involved in writing a new policy on autism and behavioral health. We were able to help bridge some of the science with the new policy and to advocate for applied behavioral analysis to be used in the treatment of autism. Our position is that some of the behavioral interventions for children on the autism spectrum not currently covered should be covered because research has demonstrated they can be effective. The policy is not completed yet. It is going through the rule promulgation process, which then will be reflected in State contracts with BHOs and MCOs.

In July 2005, TennCare clarified with the MCOs and BHOs that treatment is not specific to diagnosis. Formerly there could be disagreement over who was responsible for the treatment of a child who might have mental retardation or autism. As a result, a lot of children didn't get services to which they were entitled. Now TennCare's stance is that it doesn't matter what the diagnosis is—if there's a medically necessary reason to provide a behavioral health intervention, the MCO pays for it.

Q. What are other activities of the Office for Children's Care Coordination?

A. We work on specific programs. For example, we are working with the Commissioner of Education to help reform early intervention services for children. We're examining how State services are provided, through State dollars or federal dollars, how those services are delivered, and whether we can do this more effectively and more efficiently, so that we can provide services to more children. We expect to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education this summer.

We're collaborating with Vanderbilt on a project to coordinate substance abuse services among teenagers. The grant, which is led by Craig-Anne Heflinger [associate professor of human & organizational development], is funded by SAMSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration].

Q. Children with developmental disabilities may be at particular risk. Is the Office involved with services for these children?

A. We have a Crisis Management Team. It's charged with finding resources for children at risk for coming into State custody. Most of the cases referred involve children who have intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities like autism. Factors include lack of BHO-covered resources, lack of behavioral health care, and the difficulty parents have in finding respite care and other appropriate kinds of resources and supports. TennCare does not cover respite services. Parents just don't know what to do anymore and feel their only alternative is to give children up to State custody. The Crisis Management Team works with parents to get the services they need to maintain their families.

Jan Rosemergy is director of communications, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development.

STEPHANIE BREWER COOK JOINS THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Breaking Ground would like to introduce its readers to the newest community member of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities: Stephanie Brewer Cook. Ms. Cook is the City of Knoxville's Disability Services Coordinator, working in the Community and Neighborhood Services Dept., Community Development Division. She experienced a spinal cord injury in 1987 and, as a result, has more than 18 years of disability-related experience, both personal and professional.

As a civil rights advocate, Ms. Cook enjoys educating the general public about the importance of equality and inclusion of all people, as well as teaching persons with disabilities about their rights and the responsibilities that come with them.

A passion for advocacy is evident. "While I believe the vast majority of issues—provision of and access to health care, home/community-based services, low employment rate, lack of full inclusion and social acceptance of disability—facing persons with disabilities should be actively pursued, my personal soapbox is accessible parking, and the lack and abuse of it. I've said that when I die, there should be an inscription on my tombstone: "She finally found a parking space!"

Ms. Cook is actively involved in her community, including the creation of a student body named Accessible Campus Today (ACT) at the University of Tennessee, membership in and later leadership as Chair of the Knoxville Advisory Council for the Handicapped (KACH), now referred to as the Mayor's Council On Disability Issues (CODI), employment with Easter Seals of Tennessee as the Spinal Cord Injury Peer Support Counselor and later Program Manager for the Knoxville



PHOTO CREDIT: LYNETTE SWINFORD

office. She also works part time for the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center, educating persons who have sustained a spinal cord injury about the physical and emotional rehabilitative processes available, to enhance their re-entry into their everyday lives.

"Personally impacted by the Americans with Disabilities Act," Ms. Cook is committed to educating others about the ADA, its intent and its importance in the lives of individuals, with and without disabilities. In her work with and on behalf of the City, Ms. Cook brings both technical and personal experience to compliance and policy-related issues.

Married with a nine-year-old stepson, Ms. Cook is a graduate of Pellissippi State Technical Community College and the University of Tennessee with a degree in psychology. She is a Knoxville native who, in her free time, enjoys spending time with her family, entertaining in her home, participating in outdoor sports and activities, playing with her animals, working puzzles, writing, reading mysteries/thrillers and watching movies.

Ms. Cook's motto is, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

RISE AND LRE FOR LIFE PROJECTS SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN EFFECTIVELY INCLUDING DIVERSE LEARNERS

By Ned Andrew Solomon

Effectively educating and including diverse learners, such as students with disabilities and students with challenging behaviors, can be frustrating. Frustrating for teachers, for parents, for administrators, and, perhaps most of all, frustrating for the students themselves. There is help out there—expert help—in the form of two projects that cover the State: the RISE Project in West Tennessee, and the LRE for LIFE Project, in Middle and East Tennessee.

Established in 1986, the LRE for LIFE Project is a staff development and technical assistance project funded by the Tennessee Department of Education and managed out of the University of Tennessee - Knoxville. "LRE for LIFE" is an acronym for Least Restrictive Environment for Living, Inclusion, Friendships, and Employment, denoting the ultimate goal of schools to prepare its students to be life-long learners who live as valued, productive, democratic citizens with meaningful relationships and satisfying careers.

The RISE Project began in 1995, modeled after LRE for LIFE and other inclusionary support initiatives across the country. RISE is sponsored by the Division of Special Education and the Make a Difference Program of the Tennessee Department of Education. The project name stands for Restructuring for Inclusive School Environments, signifying not only the ultimate responsibility of schools to prepare all their students for life as valued, contributing, democratic citizens, but also the need for schools to institute teaching practices that best permits them to maximize learning for all students.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

Although both projects provide a menu of services, they are frequently known for their expertise in the area of positive behavior supports. Often, the RISE Project is asked to assist schools or faculties with students who exhibit severe and chronic challenging behaviors. "Typically the behaviors are severe enough that the LEA (local education agency) and families may be considering more restrictive placements," says Paul Ayers, RISE project coordinator, "and our goal as a project is to ensure that we support faculties, administrators, and families in such a way that students are afforded the least restrictive environment for their educational placement. We try to sit with all concerned parties and gather information so that we have multiple perspectives on why they think the behaviors of concern exist."

If the team is willing, RISE consultants work along side them to conduct a functional behavior assessment and to develop, implement, and evaluate a behavior support plan. Steps include clarifying stakeholder concerns, gathering information about the behavior—including antecedents to the behavior and consequences following the behavior—and then actively problem solving with the team. "We seek to establish a team that is transdisciplinary and child centered in nature," says Mr. Ayers. "Our goal is to facilitate the process of collaborative teaming in such a way that the team becomes self sustaining, and the student's behaviors are addressed in more appropriate, yet equally functional, ways."

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT BEHAVIOR

A common misconception—of those who are familiar with the work of the LRE and RISE consultants—is that these projects only deal with issues related to behavior. Both projects offer much more that is in the realm of improving the inclusion of students with disabilities. In fact, Jennifer Butterworth, LRE for LIFE project director, sums up their efforts succinctly. "The bottom line is kids should be welcomed, and should feel like they belong."

Besides school-wide positive behavior support—which seeks to create systems of support to increase the capacity of schools for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices—LRE for LIFE offers school-wide differentiated instruction, instructional programming for kids with the most significant cognitive challenges, helping teams of teachers or individual teachers improve their reading pedagogy (the science of teaching versus content). "Our project doesn't just deal with behavior issues," says Dr. Butterworth, "but you cannot divorce behavior support from increased learning and academic achievement." In addition to their positive behavior support efforts, RISE provides expertise in the areas of differentiated instruction, co-teaching, and pre-referral intervention.

For both projects, the training they provide is much more about how to teach than what to teach. "I couldn't tell you what goes in the curriculum content of science, 4th grade, without going to the blueprint," explains Dr. Butterworth. "Our job is that once the content is described, how do we help teachers differentiate that for differences in diverse kids, and how do we help them teach it."

HOW THE CALL COMES

For RISE, the most common form of referral comes from an administrator who is seeking support for one or more faculty members. The project also receives requests for technical assistance from other stakeholders, including directors of special education, parents, teachers, and other related service providers. The common thread for all requests is that school personnel are willing and ready to accept the supports the project offers.

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CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT: www.breakingground.org

PROJECT INCOME BY Jill Rodgers

The Tennessee Microboard Association (TMA) and People First of Tennessee (PFT) are working together on Project Income to help spread the word to people with disabilities and their families that work pays, and is a positive and essential part of life. Project Income was created through a grant from the Tennessee Employment Consortium (TEC). TEC is an employment initiative that was established five years ago through a grant from the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities to the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS). It is currently funded through a partnership among the Council, DMRS, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

Project Income is part of the DMRS Employment First! initiative. Employment First! means that employment is the first service option offered to people receiving day services from DMRS. The driving motivation behind Project Income is to hear from the experts on supported employment—specifically, families and supported employees—and then to have those experts develop trainings that can be presented to parents, family members, and individuals with disabilities who have not had the opportunity to experience employment in their communities, who did not realize employment was an option, or who did not know how to begin the process of accessing those services from DMRS.

The grant was awarded in July, 2005, and TMA and PFT began to recruit the family members and individuals with disabilities who would develop the trainings. On a cold weekend in November, family members and people with disabilities traveled from across the state to the Quality Inn in Murfreesboro with the mission to develop the Project Income trainings/curriculum and to help make the Employment First! initiative a reality in Tennessee.

After much hard work and cooperation, the teams produced two motivational professional trainings. The individuals with disabilities created training geared toward other people with disabilities who are considering getting a job, sharing their personal experiences. The family members developed a training targeted toward families who are unfamiliar with supported employment, or who might not know if that's a good option for their loved one. The family members who developed the training want to help families understand how they can work with professionals to make employment dreams a reality. After the weekend of hard work and program development, all participants returned to their home towns to get ready to spread the word about Employment First!

Initial trainings were held in March and April. On May 22nd, a Project Income training will occur in Clarksville. Trainings are open to the general public, and are free. Social Security Representatives will be available to provide information about how employment affects SSA benefits. For further information or for specific dates and times in your area, please contact Shara Winton at 615-907-1724, or by e-mail at tmainfo@bellsouth.net.

Clarksville – May 22nd, Clarksville Library, 5 to 7 pm for both individual and family member sessions

Jill Rodgers is director of Participant Managed Services, Tony Records and Associates, Inc.



PROJECT INCOME STAFF
PHOTOS BY JILL RODGERS.

NEWS FROM PATHFINDER

By Melissa Fortson & Carole Moore-Slater

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder has phone, Web, and print resources in English and Spanish to connect the Tennessee disability community with service providers. Referral services, free of cost, are provided to persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates. Pathfinder is a joint project of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development.

BILINGUAL RESOURCE DATABASE NOW AVAILABLE

A bilingual resource database listing services for the Hispanic community in Davidson County is now available on the Pathfinder Web site. A partnership between Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, the Mental Health Association of Tennessee, and Nashville Metropolitan Social Services, the database provides reliable information about disability, mental health and social services in English and Spanish. All agencies included in this database have bilingual staff, and database entries will be updated regularly. To access the database, visit www.familypathfinder.org (click on Pathfinder En Español option).

HISPANIC OUTREACH PROJECT OUTCOMES

The Hispanic Outreach Grant, a highly successful one-year project funded through the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, ended in January 2006 (the project continues as part of the Pathfinder program). The targeted location for this information and referral program for Hispanic individuals with disabilities and their families is the Woodbine Community Organization in Southeast Nashville, an area with a large number of Hispanic residents. An Hispanic Outreach Worker with Pathfinder has an office located in the Woodbine Community Center. The purpose of the project is to assist underserved Hispanic individuals with disabilities and their families by

increasing knowledge of available disability services and community supports while improving access to available programs. Outcomes included:

A total of 177 Hispanic individuals with disabilities were identified in a 12 month period. In contrast, during the 2.5 years before Project Conexión, the Bilingual Social Worker at Pathfinder identified a total of 80 Hispanic clients with disabilities statewide. A case management approach is a necessity with the Hispanic population due to language barriers and legal status of individuals needing services.

Pathfinder partnered with the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee and Metro Social Services to develop a new Nashville area Hispanic Community Database in English and Spanish that is available on the Pathfinder Web site. The focus of this database is disability services and social services that have bilingual staff available. This database links to the Pathfinder Web site at www.familypathfinder.org

The Hispanic Outreach Project sponsored disability training in the Hispanic community, including the "Power of Communication" workshop in April 2005 and "Disability Services in the Nashville Hispanic Community" forum in December 2005. Both workshops trained agency representatives to communicate effectively with clients with disabilities and their families and with other agencies, offered an opportunity for networking among agencies, and provided information on disability-related services available in Spanish in Davidson County. Both workshops received very strong evaluations from participants.

STAY CONNECTED

WITH PATHFINDER

Pathfinder publishes The Pathfinder, an e-newsletter contain-

ing information about program activities and other disability-related resources in Tennessee. Past issues of the publication are archived on the Pathfinder Web site (under Pathfinder Features, click on "The Pathfinder: News from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder.") To receive future news from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder via e-mail, please contact us at tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder
(615) 322-8529 (Nashville area)
(800) 640-4636 (toll-free, English & Español)
(800) 273-9595 (TTY)
www.familypathfinder.org
tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu

DISABILITY SERVICES & SUPPORTS DIRECTORY NOW ONLY \$10

The 2004-2005 Tennessee Disability Services & Supports Directory, published by the Tennessee Disability Pathfinder Office, is a source of information regarding state and local programs and services. The newest edition is available by geographic region (East, Middle, and West Tennessee). Order forms are available online at <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/devents/order.html>.

Melissa Fortson is disability resource specialist with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center.

Carole Moore-Slater is program director of Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center.

TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

DISABILITY PATHFINDER

VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCING THDA'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Interview by Alicia Cone, Ph.D.



PHOTO CREDIT: STATE OF TENNESSEE

Ted R. Fellman is the new executive director of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA). Mr. Fellman began his career in State government in April 1984. He has served previously in the Department of Finance and Administration and in the Department of Correction. Mr. Fellman joined THDA in March, 1995. He was appointed as the Executive Director by the THDA Board of Directors on September 22, 2005 and took office November 1, 2005.

THDA is governed by a 19-member Board of Directors and administers in excess of \$450 million in funding each year for single and multi-family housing programs across Tennessee. THDA is an important partner in the area of housing and homeownership for Tennesseans with disabilities. We asked Mr. Fellman to share some of his vision regarding THDA, accessible and affordable housing for Tennesseans with disabilities; and leadership.

AC: Briefly explain the role of THDA in Tennessee, and where you see THDA five years from now...what is your vision for THDA?

TRF: Traditionally, THDA has been an administrator of programs. THDA has done a great job at this. We have been efficient and allocated resources well. We have reacted well to recommendations from community partners. In the future, THDA wants to be more of a leader. We want to identify needs, and meet those needs. We want to be proactive, creative, the resource for housing. I want people to think about checking in with us first if they have a housing issue. We want

to evolve into that role. I see that happening over the next two to three years. We want to take a good organization and bump it up to the next level to be a great organization. THDA is working to redefine itself.

AC: What do you perceive as the greatest challenges or barriers to Tennesseans accessing affordable, accessible, and safe housing?

TRF: First, money, being able to afford a home from the personal income perspective. Second, is the availability of affordable housing. This has to do with working with builders to build homes in an affordable price range. The third is education, which refers to financial education. Things like budgeting, saving for contingencies, upkeep. Homebuyer education is very important. And a big component under this is being educated and aware of predatory lending practices. This can be a big barrier to getting and keeping a home.

AC: What do you perceive as the greatest barriers faced specifically by people with disabilities?

TRF: Of course, the same issues as above, but perhaps more around the organizations that help build housing for people with disabilities. There is sometimes a lack of understanding about disability issues, a lack of funding for building in an affordable price range, and a lack of support services for the person with disabilities after the house has been purchased. It is important to maintain the livability of the house after it has been bought.

AC: What are you looking for in partner organizations?

TRF: Having a partner with the technical expertise to put all the pieces of homeownership together, such as getting the house built, getting the funding, and

maintaining the house afterwards. We need organizations that have the ability to organize all the activities around housing. THDA needs to build the capacity of partners that are already out there to do all of this.

AC: What areas in the affordable housing field do you see as ripe for collaborative efforts? What partnerships or collaborations would you like to see develop or better developed in the next five years?

TRF: Definitely the area of special needs housing. We are collaborating with the Creating Homes Initiative at the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, and also we are collaborating with the Division of Mental Retardation Services, but there is more to do. THDA has a commitment from the Board of Directors to do special needs housing, and we believe we have an obligation to lead through partnership in all areas of housing. We also want to collaborate more with the Public Housing Agencies in order to leverage more resources.

AC: The Council initiated the Tennessee Home of Your Own (THOYO) Project for individuals with disabilities eight years ago. We learned that home ownership is a viable option for some individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. A recent component of this project is spearheaded by the Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee and is a 'Habitat for Humanity' model of new home construction for individuals with intellectual disabilities. We understand that THDA is supportive of this initiative. What is THDA's role in supporting and replicating innovative housing options like this one, across the State?

TRF: We want to encourage construction of homes that are affordable to people in lower income levels. THDA definitely sees this as a model that works for people with low income. Philosophically, THDA is supportive of any

THE COUNCIL'S MISSION

The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities provides leadership to ensure independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the community through promotion of system change.

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL?

The federal Developmental Disabilities Act created a council in each state and the five territories to provide citizens with disabilities the opportunity to improve state service systems. The Tennessee Council consists of 21 persons who have disabilities or family members and of individuals with disabilities and who represent the State's nine Development Districts. The Council also includes representatives of private and State agencies that provide services or administer funding for disability-related services.

PROMOTING SYSTEM CHANGE GRANT PROGRAM

The Council promotes innovative demonstration projects through time limited grants in areas such as housing, voting, public transportation, health care, employment, and child care.

PUBLIC POLICY

The Council works with State and federal legislators and public and private policy-makers to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Two programs bring Tennesseans with disabilities and their family members together to learn about disability issues and enhance their leadership and self-advocacy skills (Partners in Policymaking™ and Youth Leadership Forum).

PUBLICATIONS

The Council publishes two free publications (*Breaking Ground; Legislative Monitor*) to keep Tennesseans informed of disability issues.

AREAS OF EMPHASIS

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

Increase services and supports to enable individuals to live in their own homes and communities rather than in institutions.

EMPLOYMENT

Increase employment and training opportunities.

HOUSING

Increase opportunities to rent or own a home.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Increase access to assistive technology to support individuals to obtain jobs, participate in educational opportunities, and live independently.

EDUCATION

Promote school environments that respect differences and, through best practices, support the individualized needs of students with and without disabilities.

TRANSPORTATION

Increase access to additional transportation options and promote accessible public transportation.

CONTACT THE COUNCIL AT:

(615) 532-6615
tnddc@state.tn.us
www.state.tn.us/cdd



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THDA

organization doing this, and in practical terms, this fits well into our New Start Mortgage Loan Program. We need to make serving special needs populations more of an organizational strategy, and we need to give the community the tools and resources they need to do their work.

As far as innovation goes, THDA needs to leverage other funds, encourage and increase awareness, and encourage replication of the good stuff that is going on out there. Part of being a leader is making sure people are allowed and able to do what they do best, given freedom to make mistakes and then continue on, and creating an environment in which people and organizations can do great things in affordable housing.

Alicia A. Cone, is project research and development coordinator with the Council on Developmental Disabilities.

JOIN US FOR THE FOURTH ANNUAL TENNESSEE DISABILITY MEGAConference Mark Your Calendars Now!

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Franklin Marriott Cool Springs**

Registration Deadline: June 1, 2006

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or call 615-248-5878/1-800-287-9636.



UPCOMING ARTS ISSUE 2006

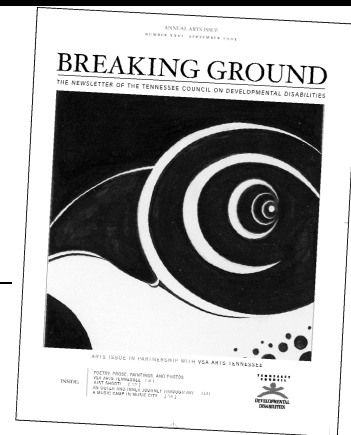
The editorial staff of *Breaking Ground* invite you to contribute to a special issue devoted to the arts coming in September 2006. All entries must be submitted by July 15.

Do you write short stories or poetry?
Do you paint, draw, or take pictures?
Then we'd like to see your work for possible publication! The editor will consider:

- fiction up to 1,000 words and poems
- photographs, and all other forms of artwork

Our color pages are limited, so the submitted material must reproduce well in black-and-white. Content is devoted to materials by or about people with disabilities.

We'll give contributors a prominent by-line, a biographical note, and copies of the issue. Please include your name, hometown, and a two or three sentence biography with your submission.



PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO:

Breaking Ground Arts Issue,
c/o Ned Andrew Solomon,
Tennessee Council on
Developmental Disabilities
Andrew Jackson Building
500 Deaderick Street,
13th Floor Suite 1310,
Nashville, TN 37243
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TENNESSEE SPOTLIGHT

Ms. Delsenia Sales, Nashville, was one of the inaugural recipients of the Contemporary Black History Makers Award on February 4, 2006. The award was established by the Christian Writers Ministry Network of John Wesley United Methodist Church to celebrate African-Americans who are trailblazers, pioneers, founders, leaders, activists, and artists whose efforts have opened up new opportunities for African-Americans, improving the quality of life for their communities and this Nation as a whole. Ms. Sales has had poetry and photographs in the annual Creative Expressions exhibits of the Mayor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. Ms. Sales and the other inaugural recipients were congratulated and commended in a resolution from the Tennessee General Assembly's House of Representatives.

Partners grads Pam Bryan (04-05) and Suzanne Colsey (03-04) have both been appointed to the Tennessee Technology Access Project Statewide Advisory Council. TTAP provides Tennesseans with disabilities comprehensive information related to assistive technology. The executive director of TTAP, Kevin Wright, is the former director of the Tennessee Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute. Bryan and Colsey will join several other Partners grads on the Advisory Council: Floyd Stewart (94-95), Cynthia Leatherwood (98-99), and Carol Smith (01-02).

Lizzy Solomon, daughter of Council Partners director, Ned Andrew Solomon, and Easter Seals Child Development Center director, Amy Harris-Solomon, recently competed in the National Young Entrepreneurship Business Competition in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her business venture—Lizzy's Lines, a greeting card company depicting positive images of children with disabilities—won 2nd place in the Middle School and Elementary Division and a top award for Most Creative Business. Lizzy's enterprise also took first place in the Nashville CEO Academy's awards, presented earlier this year.

AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO LONG-TERM CARE SERVICES AND INFORMATION By Diane Schlaufman

There is good news for individuals seeking information on long-term care services. The Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD) has received a three-year grant offered by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Administration on Aging to develop two of the first Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC) in the State of Tennessee. The \$800,000 grant will be divided between two pilot sites: the First Tennessee Development District Area Agency on Aging and Disability, and the Greater Nashville Regional Council Area Agency on Aging and Disability.

First Tennessee is in the northeastern section of the State, encompassing Johnson, Carter, Unicoi, Washington, Hawkins, Sullivan, Hancock and Greene counties. Greater Nashville covers the north central section of Tennessee, comprising Stewart, Montgomery, Robertson, Sumner, Wilson, Davidson, Rutherford, Williamson, Cheatham, Dickson, Humphreys, Houston, and Trousdale counties.

The Resource Centers will serve as "one-stop" or single entry points for a wide range of long-term care services. These centers will help local communities integrate their varied long-term support programs into a single, coordinated system that will make it easier for families to get the most effective care for their loved ones, usually right in their own communities.

The current framework for long-term care involves multiple agencies with multiple steps, which makes the system more difficult and confusing for consumers to access. Replacing the existing framework with that of a single-entry point delivery system will reduce time, hassle, and frustration.

The Centers will target older persons, age 60 and over, and persons with physical disabilities, age 21 and over. The Centers will offer information, counseling and assistance with long-term care, benefits and care giving options. Consumers will have easy access to this seamless long-term care system by phone, Internet, and by directly visiting one of the Center locations. Both pilot sites are in the early planning stages and the site locations have not yet been determined.

Although the ADRC will be administered through the two Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities, many voices and perspectives will spearhead the planning and development. Leadership will come from two levels of Advisory Councils. A statewide Advisory Council established by TCAD will advise on key elements while a State Policy Council, involving the leaders of State Departments and TCAD, will serve as the operational decision makers.

Each pilot site also will have a local Advisory Council that will pull together linkages and systems in their respective areas. The Councils will include community stakeholders in the areas of aging and disability advocacy and consumer groups, home and personal care providers, home health agencies, nursing homes, and others.

For more information about the Aging and Disability Resource Centers, please contact the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability at 615-741-2056 or TTY 615-532-3893, First Tennessee AAAD at 423-928-0224, and GNRC AAAD at 615-862-8828.

Diane Schlaufman is information and assistance programs department coordinator at GNRC AAAD.

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LRE must secure that commitment in advance too. "A variety of people will say, 'hey, can you do?' but ultimately, if it's at a school level, the principal has to be leading the call in-even if it's support for an individual teacher or a team of teachers," says Dr. Butterworth. "We won't go in if the principal is not supportive, and we won't do a system-wide thing if we don't get district level support. If a parent calls, we can only say, 'our services are to schools. Here is what we'd recommend. Perhaps get us on the agenda for an IEP meeting—so we can at least share what our services involve.'"

AGREEING TO COLLABORATE

For ongoing supports to be established around a particular student, RISE establishes an agreement called a CATA, or Collaborative Agreement of Technical Assistance. In the case of LRE for Life, it's called an AOC, or Agreement of Collaboration. In either case, this document spells out the project's goals for establishing ongoing supports, and is framed in a way to hold all parties—including families—accountable for the agreed upon outcomes. "Without individual accountability," says Mr. Ayers, "teams often fail to succeed in their goals."

PROJECT STAFF AS LEARNERS

Most of the RISE and LRE for LIFE project staff have master's degrees in special or general

education, some both. In addition, staff members go through rigorous, ongoing professional development including an internal professional learning community, attending state, regional, and national conferences, and weekly staff meetings where information and concerns from schools and teams is synthesized.

"From day one we are all continually training ourselves," says Dr. Butterworth. "I expect each consultant to be a member of at least two national organizations. I expect them to go to conferences—meaty, research-based conferences. We read books together, and share journal articles. Virtually every week there's something that the staff has to read and critique, and we discuss how we are going to apply it to our technical assistance."

OBSTACLES TO SUPPORT

There are times, however, when school personnel, including administrators and teachers, do not wish to have LRE or RISE's brand of ongoing support. There tend to be various reasons for the refusal, including a lack of available resources, such as release time for teachers. "I think most schools and systems do wish to see their students succeed, but finding the resources to actively problem solve around a particular student can be daunting," says Mr. Ayers. "Our goal is to

ensure that the supports we develop for one student are successful for others in the school as well, but getting started in this process can be difficult for some LEAs."

"In some cases, people may not really want the technical assistance—we're being called in because the State has mandated it, or the principal or supervisor has requested it," says Dr. Butterworth. "Or if a parent promoted it, because they are trying to be a good advocate, and the school didn't want to step on any toes—so they're playing the game, trying to pacify the parent, but they're not in it wholeheartedly. I don't think they're cognitively sabotaging it, but they do through their inaction."

And then some of the larger school systems have their own experts and extensive resources to offer their students—so LRE for LIFE and RISE support may not be needed. Still there's another reason, perhaps the most frustrating of all: budget constraints. Both projects' services are free to schools, and when there are decreases—or at least no increases—in funding, project staff are stretched to provide the level of service needed to ensure a quality education for all students.

For more information about the RISE Project, call 901-678-4932 or e-mail Paul Ayers at payers@memphis.edu.

For LRE for LIFE info, call 865-974-2760, or e-mail Jennifer Butterworth at jrb@utk.edu.

ACCESSIBLE BUILDERS CONSORTIUM, INC.

INTERVIEW by Alicia Cone, Ph.D.

Floyd Stewart, Jr. is the founder and director of Accessible Builders Consortium, Inc. (ABC, Inc.). In 1984, Mr. Stewart experienced a cervical spinal cord injury, and for the last 15 years has been an advocate for individuals with disabilities in Nashville. Mr. Stewart works at the Center for Independent Living (CIL) of Middle Tennessee, which provides services for Davidson County and its seven contiguous counties. The Center for Independent Living is a non-profit organization whose primary goal is to empower individuals with disabilities to reach their vision of independence.

Breaking Ground had the opportunity to discuss the Accessible Builders Consortium, Inc., with Mr. Stewart this past January.

BG: Floyd, please tell us how Accessible Builders Consortium got started.

FS: I'm in my 14th year at the CIL. That is my full time job. My neighbor is a licensed contractor and builder and a realtor. At the CIL, the biggest request we get is for low-income, accessible housing. I never equated the requests I got at the CIL with me actually building houses; my neighbor encouraged me to build houses to meet the need.

So in 2003, I filled out the paperwork for a 501(c)3 [non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service]. My daughter, Tracy Flowers,

helped me with this process—especially the budget. ABC was established in June, 2003, organized exclusively for charitable purposes. I originally knew nothing about managing a project like this or real estate. It seems like at every turn God put someone in my path to teach me what I needed to know. I've learned how to be a developer and builder, how to manage a project, and about real estate. I've especially learned a lot from my next door neighbor, David Williams.

BG: So you didn't have any prior experience in this area?

FS: Well, I can't say that. I worked for Daniel Construction for 2 to 3 years, and I was an electrician for 13 years before my accident, which happened when I was 35. You know Daniel Construction built Nissan.

BG: Let's continue with how ABC got started. You filed the 501(c)3 application, and then what?

FS: It was approved. ABC received 501(c)3 designation in March, 2004. Then ABC secured a grant from Metro government to be a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). We got \$25,000 from Metro for construction, and \$6,250 for administrative costs. The admin money funds salaries for me, a part-time receptionist and a consultant.

Metro also gave us the lot to build on. The lot had an estimated value of \$15,000.

Then we got \$1,000 from US Bank for construction. We got a low-interest loan from Tony Woodham at the Housing Fund, which enabled us to build the 1,250 square foot home. On November 11, 2005 we began building it in East

Nashville. It has three bedrooms and two full baths. It is 80% complete. The roof is on, as well as the doors and windows, siding and bricks. We are starting the dry wall this week, and landscaping next week. The final trim out will probably be done in early February. Then it will be put on the market for \$120,000. People are already trying to pre-qualify for it!

We submitted another grant to Metro to continue as a CHDO. We have to do that annually. I am also looking at other grants to expand the program. I'm looking to do five houses a year, and I want to partner with other organizations to do housing for people with low income. I also want to do houses with Universal Design.

BG: Tell us more about accessible housing and Universal Design.

FS: This first house was not on a flat lot, so it is not universally accessible. The second house will be. On the first house, we did, however, use 36-inch doors, and the side entrance to the house is accessible. In the second house, we want to go farther. We are looking for a flat lot. We will do the 36-inch doors, a zero-step threshold, lower wall switches, higher wall sockets, maybe a roll-in shower, levered door handles. We may do some other things as well.

BG: Tell us about the services ABC offers as a CHDO.

FS: Our mission is to provide safe, decent, affordable, accessible housing to low to moderate income persons, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and families with disabled children who are at the 80% area median income level. We build with a focus on accessibility and assistive devices, which are a natural fit for me, because I use and know all about assistive devices.

We want to provide housing that increases independent living by being tailored toward the



person's disabling condition, whether it is physical, sensory or cognitive. We also want to develop housing tailored to the financial needs of people with low income. Only 2%, at best, of the people moving out of housing projects can afford to buy a home through conventional packages. Sixty-seven percent of people with disabilities fall below the median income. And 50% of that 67% don't work at all. Many may never be homeowners.

In addition, we educate individuals, families, businesses and community provider groups on the availability of affordable housing, technology and resources that increase the probability of people purchasing a home. For example, we do not offer financing packages, but I am learning about available funds and passing the information on to people who want to be homeowners. We want to be providers of homes for a population that is historically and grossly—might I add—underserved.

BG: What are your plans for the future of ABC?

FS: We would eventually like to offer rental property that is accessible. One issue is how we can do that without it looking like a disability ghetto. We don't want to go over 20% occupancy by people with disabilities. We are looking into a project in Colorado called Genesis.

BG: Any final thoughts before we wrap up our conversation?

FS: I am a by-any-means-necessary guy, and I will do anything I have to do, except lie, cheat or steal, to be an advocate for myself and others and to build affordable, accessible housing for people!

ACCESS NASHVILLE PROJECT by Carole Moore-Slater

Access Nashville celebrated its second annual training event at the Nashville Adventure and Science Museum with an enthusiastic group of volunteer participants on October 1, 2005. Thirty-five community volunteers attended, including students from Tennessee State University, Belmont University, Vanderbilt University and Middle Tennessee State University. The Access Nashville Training included a session on disability awareness/sensitivity that included participation in an interactive disability accessibility awareness exhibit at the museum. The second session included training to complete accessibility surveys that Access Nashville created for restaurants, hotels, and entertainment attractions. After the morning training, volunteers were given several places to survey and as a result, 50 additional facilities will be added to the Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau Web site at <http://www.musiccityusa.com/Visitors/accessNashville.aspx>.

The goal of Access Nashville is to survey restaurants, hotels, and entertainment establishments to gather "accessibility friendly" information, enabling persons with varying degrees of abilities to make appropriate and comfortable choices about where to eat, shop, and visit in Nashville. After an informal survey, Access Nashville assigns the facility a WOW Access, Good Access, or Limited Access rating designation. This information is then made available on the Nashville Convention and Visitor's Bureau Web site.

The Access Nashville project began in 2004 when a diverse group of individuals from the disability, business, government, and aging communities, joined together to gather "accessibility friendly" information about each facility. The project is not intended to assess compliance with the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA). This project has not only provided useful information in the community, but also an awareness of disability issues through social action. In addition, Access Nashville is proud of the logo designed by Erin Worsham, a well-known artist with a disability, printed on t-shirts worn by volunteers on Access Nashville Day. The t-shirts were printed by Crumley House Brain Injury Rehab Center in Limestone, Tennessee. In 2004, the Access Nashville Steering Committee received the "Professional Award" from the Nashville Mayor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and in 2006 was a finalist for the **Mary Catherine Strobel Volunteer Innovator Award**.

The Access Nashville solution to community accessibility requires commitment and creativity but not a lot of money and can be replicated easily in other areas of the State. Access Nashville can assist your agency with organizational ideas, surveys, and training information. For further information visit www.accessnashvilleonline.org or contact Carole Moore-Slater at Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at 800-640-4636 or by email at carole.moore-slater@vanderbilt.edu.

Carole Moore-Slater is program director of Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center.





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